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Model Constitution

for a

Federation *of* Churches

OF A COUNTY OR CITY

The Commission on State
and Local Federations of

The Federal Council of the Churches
of Christ in America

NATIONAL OFFICES:

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NEW YORK

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MODEL CONSTITUTION

FOR A

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OF A

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NOTE.—*The relation between the local, county and state Federations and the Federal Council is of a purely voluntary and co-operative nature, as the Federal Council consists of delegated representatives appointed by the national denominational or church bodies. In the interest of the spirit of unity and effective co-operation, it is deemed appropriate that Federations should give expression to their appropriate relation to the Federal Council in some such way as follows:*

RELATION TO FEDERAL COUNCIL.

The Constitution of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, organized at Philadelphia, Pa., in December, 1908, is hereby recognized, subject to the superior authority of the respective supervising Synods, Conferences, Conventions, Dioceses, Associa-

tions and other superior Church bodies, as the basis of this—Federation of Churches in co-operation with the said Federal Council, including the following principle as expressed in the Preamble and Plan of Federation of the Federal Council, to wit:

"In the providence of God, the time has come more fully to manifest the essential oneness of the Christian Churches of America in Jesus Christ as their Divine Lord and Saviour, and to promote the spirit of fellowship, service and co-operation among them."

PLAN OF FEDERATION.

"To express the fellowship and catholic unity of the Christian Church.

"To bring the Christian bodies of America into united service for Christ and the world.

"To encourage devotional fellowship and mutual counsel concerning the spiritual life and religious activities of the churches.

"To secure a larger and combined influence for the churches of Christ in all matters affecting the moral and social condition of the people, so as to promote the application of the law of Christ to every relation of human life.

"To assist in the organization of local federations and to promote the aims of the Federal Council in their communities."

This advisory and co-operative relation with the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America shall be for the purpose of effecting co-operation, and annual reports shall be sent to the Federal Council.

This Federation may also be associated with the State Federation of Churches, if one exists.

CAUTION.

A federation must fit its environment. Local leaders must discover their own local conditions, needs, limitations, and some of the possibilities. Then the constitution should simply phrase the accepted modes and methods, to which all parties agree, as adapted to the local conditions. While suggestions come from without, and much can be learned from plans which have been tried elsewhere, yet the communities must be thrown upon their own initiative, their own inventiveness and their own responsibility. The more originality which can be awakened in a community of Christians, the more vital is the Christianity.

CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE I.

NAME.

Section 1. The name of this Association shall be The——— Federation of Churches.

ARTICLE II.

OBJECT.

Section 1. The object of this Federation shall be (1) to realize the general aims of the Constitution, and (2) more particularly to foster religious movements; to promote the spirit of comity and co-operation among all our churches; to advance the charities of the community; to safeguard the welfare of children; to encourage the feeling of mutual helpfulness among all parts of society, especially in industry; to protect the interests of the Sabbath, temperance, good citizenship, social purity, and law and order; and to secure other objects pertaining to local betterment.

ARTICLE III.

MEMBERSHIP.

Section 1. This Federation shall be composed of those churches in—— that

shall by vote, according to their respective authorized methods, agree to abide by the Constitution of this Federation, and shall duly certify in writing such action to the Council.

Section 2. Any number of churches in the Federation that are in a contiguous relation may, by action of the Council, be constituted a local branch of the Federation for the purpose of more effective neighborhood work, but shall still be responsible constituent members of the Federation.

Section 3. Any church may at any time withdraw from the Federation, provided it shall take a vote to that effect according to its authorized methods, and duly certify in writing such action to the Council.

Section 4. If any church in the Federation shall be unwilling to co-operate in any movement determined upon by the Council, it shall be excused therefrom, upon its request to that effect duly presented to the Council.

ARTICLE IV.

COUNCIL.

Section 1. There shall be a Council to be known as the Council of The ——

Federation of Churches, for the purpose of representing the churches federated and of carrying on the work of the Federation, which Council shall be composed of the pastor of each church in the Federation, and a lay male member thereof, duly chosen to serve during its pleasure, and being, if possible, connected with a Men's Society in such church, together with the officers of the Federation, and the chairman of the Standing Committees, and any other person in a representative capacity, elected by a two-thirds vote at any meeting of the Council. It shall also be competent for the Council to admit to its meetings, by a two-thirds vote, any person as a corresponding member, with the right to debate but not the right to vote.

Section 2. The Council shall hold its annual meeting on the fourth Monday of September, and its regular quarterly meetings on the fourth Monday of November, February and May, and other regular meetings at its discretion. At such meetings the following shall be the order of business, to wit: Prayer, roll-call, minutes, unfinished business, report of the Treasurer, communica-

tions, report of the Corresponding or Executive Secretary, reports of standing committees, reports of special committees, election of officers (if the meeting be the annual meeting), miscellaneous business. The hour and place of all meetings, together with any necessary change of date, shall be fixed by the President in conference with the Corresponding or Executive Secretary.

Section 3. A special meeting of the Council or of the Federation may be jointly called by the President and the Corresponding or Executive Secretary at their discretion, and the President shall always call a special meeting when requested in writing so to do by any five members of the Council, representing at least three denominations. The business of such meeting shall be limited to the matters mentioned in the call.

ARTICLE V.

OFFICERS.

Section 1. The officers of the Federation and of the Council shall be a President, two or more Vice-Presidents, a Recording Secretary, a Corresponding or Executive Secretary, a Treasurer, and such other officers as shall be found to

be necessary by the Council; all which officers shall be elected by the Council at its annual meeting, and shall serve until the next annual meeting after their election, and until their successors shall be elected.

Section 2. The President, or in his absence one of the Vice-Presidents, shall preside at all meetings of the Federation and of the Council. He shall appoint all committees not otherwise provided for, and shall be ex-officio a member of all committees, except where otherwise provided by the Council.

Section 3. The Vice-Presidents shall be so chosen that there shall be one for each of the denominations federated. They shall be expected not only to represent their respective denominations, but also to be a means of reaching them and increasing their interest in the work of the Federation. They may, also, at the discretion of the Council, be called upon to assist the Finance Committee.

Section 4. The Recording Secretary shall keep the minutes of all meetings of the Council and of the Federation, and shall attend to other matters pertaining to notice of meetings, notification of appointments and care of rec-

ords. He may, also, at the discretion of the Council, be appointed Recording Secretary of the Executive Committee.

Section 5. The Corresponding or Executive Secretary shall conduct the correspondence of the Council, and attend to general affairs as the Council shall determine.

Section 6. The Treasurer shall receive all offerings from the churches and from other parties, giving receipts therefor; shall, under his official title as "Treasurer of the —— Federation of Churches," deposit and keep all such moneys in a convenient bank, and pay out the same upon properly certified orders, as hereinafter provided, and shall make a detailed report of all such matters to the Council at its regular meetings and whenever requested by it so to do.

Section 7. The Recording Secretary records and accounts in permanent form and the Treasurer shall each keep his in suitable books, which shall be the property of the Council, and be turned over on demand to their successors in office.

ARTICLE VI.

COMMITTEES.

Section 1. For the purpose of facilitating the work of the Federation, the Council shall appoint, or failing such appointment, the President shall appoint from the membership of the Council or from the membership of the churches federated or from both, the following Standing Committees, having due regard to representation of the denominations federated, which committees shall be composed of such numbers, as the Council shall determine, and, subject always to the supervisory authority of the Council, shall have the powers hereinafter mentioned, to wit:

(1) An Executive Committee: Charge of matters pertaining to membership; the organization of any needed local branches of the Federation; business of a general character, and other matters not specifically assigned to other committees, and any matter of emergency needing to be attended to during the interval of the meetings of the Council. The committee shall consist of the officers of the Federation, and the chairmen of the standing committees and

such other persons as the Council shall determine.

(2) A Comity and Home Missions Committee.

(3) A Sabbath Observance Committee.

(4) A Temperance Committee.

(5) A Social Purity Committee.

(6) A Foreign Missions Committee.

(7) A Social Service Committee whose duties shall be those commonly included in the work known by that term.

(8) A Finance Committee.

(9) A Nominating Committee of five or more members, representing at least two of the denominations federated, to propose to the Council the names of persons suitable for officers, from which names, together with any others duly proposed at the meeting, the officers shall be elected; also to fill vacancies until the next meeting of the Council.

Section 2. Other committees may be appointed by the Council at its discretion, such as Bible Study and Christian Education, and Community Extension.

ARTICLE VII.

FINANCES.

Section 1. The Council shall, at its annual meeting and from time to time thereafter as it may deem expedient, determine how the funds for carrying on the work of the Federation shall be provided for, and shall have authority to appeal for funds to benevolent individuals and churches on behalf of the Federation and the Council, and shall fix the appropriations for the work, which shall not be changed nor overdrawn except by authority of the Council.

Section 2. No bill contracted by any committee shall be paid by the Treasurer unless it shall first be approved in writing by the chairman of such committee. All other bills shall, before payment, be approved in writing by the chairman of the Finance Committee.

ARTICLE VIII.

QUORUM.

Section 1. A quorum at any meeting of the Council shall consist of seven members, representing at least two of the denominations federated, and at any

meeting of a committee, a majority of its members, but if any committee shall consist of more than nine members the quorum shall be five.

ARTICLE IX.

ELECTIONS.

Section 1. All elections shall be by ballot.

ARTICLE X.

AMENDMENT.

Section 1. This Constitution may be amended at any meeting of the Council by a two-thirds vote of the members present, provided that due notice of any proposed amendment shall have been given in writing at a preceding meeting of the Council, or shall, upon the request of any five members of the Council, representing at least two of the denominations federated, have been inserted in the notice of the meeting at which the amendment is to be acted upon.

The above model should be supplemented by obtaining the Constitutions of well-organized counties and cities; and in preparing Constitutions, local

committees are invited to correspond with the Secretary of the Federal Council, who will endeavor to place at their disposal the experience of other local communities.

For further information address

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